

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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## MEXICAN IGUANA, FOUR OTHER FOREIGN REPTILE SPECIES ADDED TO ENDANGERED LIST

Five foreign species of imperiled reptiles have been added to the U.S. List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The rulemaking, published in the March 20, 1980, Federal Register, lists the San Esteban Island chuckwalla of Mexico, the Fiji Island banded iguana and Fiji crested iguana, and two species of Round Island boas as endangered. (Round Island lies near Mauritius in the Indian Ocean.)

The population of the San Esteban Island chuckwalla, a large lizard found only on the island of its name in the Gulf of California, is estimated to number fewer than 4500. Many specimens have been removed for the exotic pet trade, particularly since the lizards' main habitat is a single arroyo easily accessible by road. The species is not now protected by international trade agreements, although a collecting permit is required by Mexico. It is anticipated that listing the chuckwalla will provide additional protection under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act by imposing added restrictions on importation to the U.S.

The Fiji Island banded iguana and Fiji crested iguana are found only in the Pacific, the former on several islands in Fiji and Tonga, and the latter--a recently discovered species--only on a small, remote island in the Fiji group. Both species are threatened by elimination of habitat through tree removal by humans and vegetation destruction by feral goats. In addition, the banded iguana faces the threat of commercial exploitation by the exotic pet trade. Other problems facing these colorful lizards are predation by feral cats and killing by native Fijians.

The Round Island boas are the sole surviving members of a group of primitive boas. There have been only six sightings of one species since 1975, and the other species' population is estimated to be no more than 75. These snakes are mainly threatened by deterioration of their palm forest habitat due to destruction of vegetation (causing erosion) by the rabbits and goats brought to Round Island in 1840.

Although the four Fiji and Round Island species are protected in their native countries, their low populations, remote habitats, and narrow ranges could undermine their precarious hold on existence. Listing the reptiles as endangered will emphasize the importance of protection to residents of the Fiji group, Tonga, Mexico, and Mauritius and will make U.S. funds and wildlife expertise available to aid the conservation programs of these countries where the species occur.

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